

THE TWIN-LOBED PENDANT, AN ARCHAIC ARTEFACT FROM THE NELSON DISTRICT

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Abstract. Ten twin-lobed pendants of the New Zealand archaic phase of Maori culture are presented and their raw material, formal variation and distribution described. Raw material and distribution point to an origin in the Nelson district. The suspension of twin-lobed pendants, their symbolism and the significance of their distribution are discussed.

In 1925 the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* published in successive numbers editorial notes on two examples of "a peculiar stone artifact of unknown use". The first reference was to one which had been found recently during drain digging operations near Waverley (Anon. 1925a:273). The second example had been found forty years previously near the mouth of the Rangitikei River (Anon. 1925b:385). The two items are now in the Wanganui and Auckland Museums respectively. The following year a third example was brought to the attention of members of the Polynesian Society by the Director of the Wanganui Museum, Mr R.G. Firth (1926:175-176). It had been found in 1914 at Karehana Bay, Plimmerton, on Porirua Harbour, and was acquired by the Wanganui Museum in the 1920s (Fig. 1).

In *The Moa-Hunter Period of Maori Culture*, Duff (1950:106-110) discussed the form under the name "hybrid reel", describing it as a "partly divided sphere". He identified the artefacts as amulets or pendants, to be worn on the breast, suspended around the neck. Duff noted the three North Island examples which had been introduced in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, and drew attention to three more: from Whangamoia and Whakapuaka, near Nelson, and from the Wairau Bar site near Blenheim. All three are held in the Canterbury Museum. A seventh example was published in 1953 by Skinner & Phillipps (1953:177, 191). It is said to come from Fisherman Island on the west side of Tasman Bay, Nelson, and is now in the Nelson Museum.

In 1974 Skinner ascribed the name "human testicles" to the form (Skinner 1974:58, 59), and introduced yet another example which he incorrectly located to Kawakawa, Northland. It was, in fact, found in the 1950s by Mrs Mavis Brambley, at the important archaic site near Manukau South Head, Auckland (N46-47/17). It was the presentation of this item to the Auckland Museum in 1981, as part of the Bill and Mavis Brambley Collection, which prompted the present research.

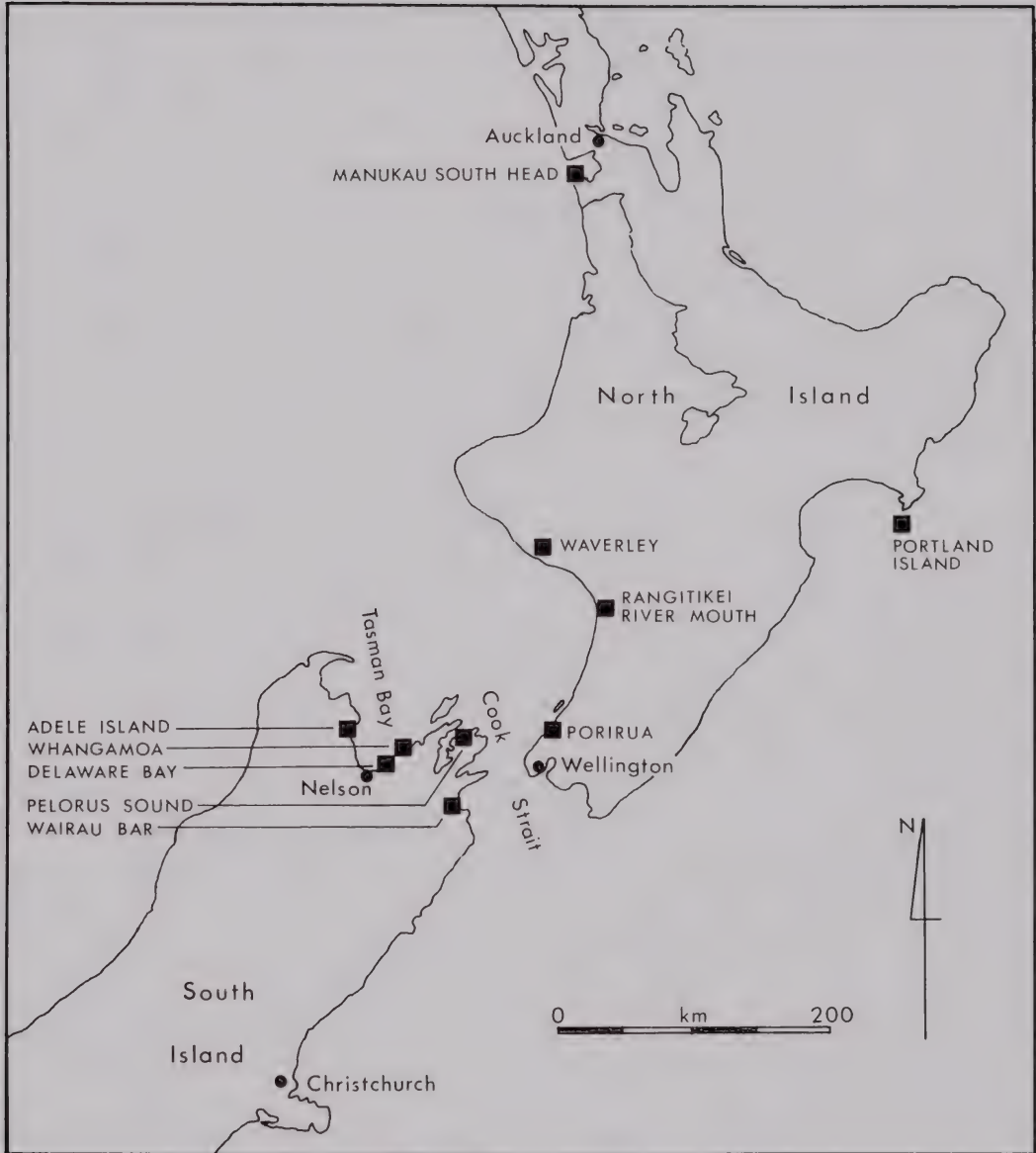


Fig. 1. Map showing distribution of finds.

Two further examples of the 'partly divided sphere' can now be introduced. One was found on the shore of Pelorus Sound in 1956-57 and is now in the Nelson Museum; the other is said to have been found on Portland Island, Hawkes Bay, and is held in the Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum, Napier. The known total therefore is ten, all held in public museums. There may be other examples in private hands, of which information would be gratefully received by the writer. The purpose of the present report is to bring together what is known of the provenance and physical characteristics of the known examples, to examine their origin and distribution, and to consider their symbolism and relationship with other pendant forms.

Before entering the detailed description of examples of this artefact, reference is needed to the name. Duff's (1950:106) "hybrid reel" is essentially interpretative, as is Skinner's (1974:58) "human testicles". Much better is "partly divided sphere" (Duff 1950:106), in that the name is purely descriptive, leaving interpretation open. Some examples, however, are far from spherical, and for this reason I put forward here the name 'twin-lobed pendant' as being more accurately descriptive, and at the same time describing the use or function on which there is general agreement. In this name I follow Jolly and Law who first used it in their 1977-78 typescript catalogue of the Brambley Collection.

THE PENDANTS

The group of ten pendants includes seven complete, or near complete, examples and three represented by one lobe or a part thereof. Presentation here is by institutions in which they are held; catalogue numbers are in parentheses.

Auckland Institute and Museum

Manukau South Head (AR7000), Fig. 2

The Manukau South Head pendant was found by Mrs M. Brambley at the important archaic site, N46-47/17, Manukau South Head. The only previously published reference and illustration is in Skinner (1974:58-59), where the location is incorrect.

The raw material is deep green/black serpentine with some pale green inclusions. At 44.8 g the Manukau South Head pendant is much the lightest of the group, less than half the weight of any other. The measurements (width, 41 mm; height, 30 mm; depth, 27.5 mm) show it to be not spherical, but having a distinctly greater length than height or depth.

Rangitikei River Mouth (17319), Fig. 3

This pendant was found by Mr E.C. Rockel in the 1890s near the mouth of the Rangitikei River. The first publication of the item was in 1925 (Anon. 1925b:385). It came into the Auckland Museum in 1932.

The raw material is dark green/black serpentine. The Rangitikei River pendant is one that can reasonably be described as a 'divided sphere'. The measurements of 64 mm width, 59 mm height and 56.5 mm depth show how nearly spherical it is. The weight is 246 g. Figures 2 and 3, showing the two Auckland Museum examples, illustrate nicely two characteristic pendant shapes, the spherical and the slightly elongate, and two treatments of the central notch, slightly flared or with parallel sides.

Canterbury Museum

Delaware Bay (E146.271), Fig. 4

The pendant previously described as having come from Whakapuaka (Duff 1950:109) is more accurately located to Delaware Bay. It was ploughed up by Mr

T.A. Fuller on the terrace which backs the lagoon behind the bay, overlooking the Tuarawhiti sandspit. It came into Canterbury Museum in 1946, and was first published by Duff (1950:109, Pl.14).

The Delaware Bay pendant is important as the only example yet found which is apparently made from material other than serpentine. Duff (1950:109) describes it as serpentine, but the dark grey hammerdressed appearance of the stone is quite unlike the serpentine of all other twin-lobed pendants. Beverley McCulloch of the Canterbury Museum suggests it is basalt. The pendant falls into the small group of these artefacts which are spherical, or nearly so, as the close conformity of width (74 mm), height (70 mm) and depth (61 mm) shows. At 429.1 g the Delaware Bay pendant is much the heaviest of the group. It was broken in two at the neck when ploughed up and has since been glued together.

Wairau Bar (1459), Fig. 5

Only one lobe was recovered of the Wairau Bar pendant. The finder, Jim Eyles, writes (17 December 1984) that it, "...was found on the surface after cultivation of the paddock in the main camp area and was not associated with the burial location." It was recovered in the 1940s and was first described by Duff (1950:110) in his report on the Wairau site.

The raw material is dark green/black serpentine. The piece does not include the neck so that the 52.5 g weight must be more than doubled for the total, which was perhaps 120 g. The height (43 mm) and depth (37 mm) can be obtained from the recovered piece. The length may be estimated at 55 mm. Duff's (1950:110) statement that the pendant is slightly flattened at the 'back' is arguable (see Fig. 5).

Whangamoia (E120.6.1), Fig. 6

The Whangamoia pendant was found by Mr H. Thomas at the mouth of the Whangamoia River, some 10 km north-east of Delaware Bay. It retains the sand-blasted appearance of beach finds. It was first published by Duff (1950:107-109, Pl.14), and subsequently by Skinner (1974:58-59). In Mead (1984:180) it is illustrated in the catalogue where it is incorrectly labelled as the Whakapuaka (that is, Delaware Bay) example.

This pendant is one of the lightest in the group at 106.4 g. It measures 53 mm in width, 46 mm in height and 29 mm in depth. Viewed from one side (Fig. 6) it has a close similarity to the Manukau South Head item (see Fig. 2). The other side, however, in contrast to all other twin-lobed pendants, is markedly flattened (Fig. 6). It is from the flat side of this pendant that Duff (1950:107) drew the conclusion that these artefacts were designed to be worn against the breast as a necklace unit or pendant.

For cultural reasons, these images have been removed.
Please contact Auckland Museum for more information.

Figs. 2-6. Twin-lobed pendants. 2. Manukau South head. 3. Rangitikei River Mouth.
4. Delaware Bay. 5. Wairau Bar fragment; view of cleft with broken neck at top. 6.
Whangamoia; view from above (left) and front.

Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum

Portland Island? (85,101), Fig. 7

The fragmentary remains of a pendant came into the Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum with the Field Collection in 1984. Mr Field understood that his uncle found the item on Portland Island off Mahia Peninsula in the 1930s, but the possibility that it came from the Nelson district, from which a considerable part of the collection derives, was not ruled out.

The fragment of one lobe that has come to us has itself been broken in two and subsequently glued together again. The fragment weighs 94.5 g which is indicative of a total weight of *ca.* 350 g. The depth can be measured to 53 mm, and the width and height estimated at *ca.* 75 mm and *ca.* 70 mm respectively. The pendant was probably of fairly spherical form. The raw material is unique, being pale green serpentine with black inclusions to give a mottled appearance.

Nelson Provincial Museum

Adele Island (E320.72), Fig. 8

Half of a twin-lobed pendant was found *ca.* 1932 on Adele Island at the western side of Tasman Bay. The finder was Mr L.L. McNamara, who was in company with the collector Mr G. Soper. The pendant was first published by Skinner & Phillipps (1953:177 and 191). Skinner & Phillipps, and Duff (1956:108), locate the item to Fisherman Island, which is *ca.* 1 km south of Adele Island; I follow the museum catalogue entry in giving Adele Island as the location.

What remains of this item is one lobe and the greater part of the neck to the second lobe. The weight is 70 g which gives an original total weight of *ca.* 135 g. The height of the lobe is 45 mm and the depth, 35.8 mm. The width of the pendant may be estimated at *ca.* 50 mm. There is interesting evidence of re-use. A hole has been drilled through the broken neck to allow use as a pendant with the surface of the single curved lobe facing outwards. The curved surface itself is now decorated with incised designs, mostly tiny single spirals, with the single strongest element a concentric design reminiscent of the human mouth of some styles of Maori wood carving.

Pelorus Sound (E2.66), Fig. 9

This pendant was found in 1956-57 by Mr Ross Webber at the side of a creek behind Moki Bay, Pelorus Sound (map reference S11 (2nd ed.) 312627). The finder presented it to the Nelson Museum in 1965. Moki Bay is at the seaward end of Pelorus Sound, an area where the many small sites at the rear of bays and beaches are marked by flakes of metasomatised argillite indicating close links with the argillite (and serpentine) sources to the west.

The raw material is of mottled green serpentine, somewhat different from the usual dark green/black material. It is also a harder material than usual, which perhaps accounts for the comparatively poor finish. The weight is in excess of 100 g (a small

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Figs. 7-11. Twin-lobed pendants. 7. Portland Island (?) fragment. 8. Adele Island fragment (from Skinner & Phillipps 1953:191). 9. Pelorus Sound. 10. Porirua; with sketch showing double row of notches. 11. Waverley; showing arrangement of grooves at neck.

fragment is broken off one lobe). The width is 52.5 mm, height 36 mm and depth 34 mm. The rough finish includes small grooves which remain where the central notch has been cut out.

Wanganui Regional Museum

Porirua (51.310), Fig. 10

Usually referred to as having come from Porirua, this pendant was found in 1914 by a contractor, Mr MacMahon, while excavating house foundations at Karehana Bay, Plimmerton, at the north side of Porirua Harbour (Firth 1926:175). It subsequently came into the Wanganui Museum and was first published by the director of the museum, Mr R.G. Firth, in 1926. In the first reference the find spot is described as "... a very old settlement at Motuhara, on Porirua Harbour."

The most unique aspect of this pendant is the two rows of 42 notches divided by a shallow sawn groove, which extends over the narrow curved top (Fig. 10). Overall, the shape of the pendant is also unusual: it is narrow (22 mm depth), almost twice as wide (67.5 mm) as it is high (35.5 mm) and is almost flat along the bottom. It has been broken into two large and several small pieces, now glued together. In addition one side has been severely battered, with many pieces still missing. The original pendant thus weighed rather more than the present 108 g. The battering it has received may date from the pendant's discovery; or it may date from an earlier time when the item was deliberately broken by its owners in a manner reminiscent of the ritual breakage of hei tiki. The battering has exposed the interior which is black serpentine with numerous opaque white veins.

Waverley (51.309), Fig. 11

The editorial note and illustration of this item in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* in 1925 was the first published reference to the artefact form (Anon. 1925a:273). The location is given as Waverley; the museum catalogue adds the information, "found by Fred Parkinson drain digging". There are photographs in the original reference and line drawings in Skinner (1974:58).

The Waverley pendant weighs 225.5 g. It is made of dark green/black serpentine with veins of pale green colouration. The width is 56 mm, height 47 mm and depth 46 mm. It is similar in size and shape to the Rangitikei River mouth example. What makes it unique is the well-finished pattern of grooves at the top of the neck which extend in a V-shape from each side of the top of the central cleft, resulting in a diamond pattern. End on, the shape of the item is markedly triangular, with the pendant sitting securely on a flat bottom.

DISCUSSION

Nine of the group of ten twin-lobed pendants are made of serpentine (or 'talc') from the Nelson region. The raw material occurs in association with a variety of metasomatised rocks in the Ultramafic Belt which extends through hilly or mountainous country from D'Urville Island in the north 200 km southward. It is available

both *in situ* and as water-rolled material in riverbeds. Except in two cases the serpentine is a comparatively soft dark green/black material, often with pale green veins or, in the case of the Porirua pendant, opaque white veins. The Pelorus Sound item is of a hard serpentine of lighter green colour, and the Portland Island example is made of pale green, coarse, material with black inclusions. The Delaware Bay pendant may be made of basalt, which occurs in meta-basalt form in the Nelson Ultramafic Belt.

Twin-lobed pendants take a variety of forms. Some are nearly spherical: the Rangitikei River Mouth and Delaware Bay pendants provide the best examples. The Portland Island pendant, and possibly the Adele Island and Wairau Bar examples, may also have been close to spherical if indications from the surviving fragments are true to the whole. The Waverley pendant appears round from the front, but from the top is distinctly flattened at the ends and sides (see Fig. 11), and from the end view takes on a rounded triangular shape. The Manukau South Head example takes the elongate form further than the Waverley pendant. The Pelorus Sound pendant is close to the Manukau example in form, as the measurements and Figs. 2 and 9 show. From the front, the Whangamoia pendant is also closely similar to the Manukau South Head item; from the end or above, however, it is very clearly different having a depth of only 29 mm as a result of one almost flat side (Fig. 6). The remaining, Porirua, pendant takes even further this flat sided form, in addition to its other unique formal aspects (see Fig. 10). In this case the pendant is only 22 mm deep, with both sides quite flat. As well, the width is almost twice the height which makes it unusual indeed. Only three items have decorative elements additional to the basic form: the pendant from Waverley has a diamond shaped arrangement of grooves at the top of the neck, that from Porirua has a double row of notches separated by a groove which extends over the narrow 'top' of the pendant, and that from Adele Island has incised surface decoration.

The central cleft in almost all cases is widest at the mouth of the opening and narrower towards the neck. The clefts are the result of cutting by attrition 'saws' made of an abrasive stone material — probably sandstone. The parallel sided cleft evident in the Rangitikei River Mouth pendant presents a contrast to all others. It was cut probably by a similar technique, in this case making use of a thin flat 'saw' with parallel sides.

Lacking any perforation, the twin-lobed pendant must have been lashed to its suspension cord. Throughout the Pacific the manufacture of suspension cords for necklace or pendant units is itself a craft: the suspension is an important and decorative part of the total artefact. Suspension cords typically comprise much more than a simple twist or cord. They may include a fibre core, an enclosing decorative cord or braid, as well as the line by which the necklace units are actually suspended (see for example Te Rangi Hiroa 1944:113). The line which holds the necklace units may be enclosed within the body of the main cord, emerging to thread or tie the necklace units, or may simply tie each unit independently to the main suspension cord. Alternatively, the suspension may be made up of multiple light individual cords to which the pendant unit or units are attached, with a single strong cord continuing around the back of the neck for tying. An example in the Auckland Museum is from Aitutaki in the Cook Islands: a black-lipped pearl oyster (*Pinctada margaritifera*) pendant is lashed

through four perforations along the upper margin to 32 light two-ply rolled cords (Te Rangi Hiroa 1944:122). The well known *lei palaoa* ornament of Hawaii also used multiple strands, in this case of human hair.

Within the tradition of decorative suspension elements to which pendant units are strongly lashed it is easy to see how the New Zealand twin-lobed pendant was suspended. The main decorative suspension element, whether of single or multiple strands, was laid over the top of the pendant unit, which was then lashed to it by fine thread passed repeatedly through the cleft. The notches on top of the Waverley pendant may give clues as to the form of decorative lashing employed (see Fig. 11). It can be argued that the diamond shaped design marks the boundary of a lashing device which held the pendant in position (with line passed many times through the cleft for strength and rigidity) to properly present to the world the two lobes and the cleft between them.

Further to this it may be suggested that it is unlikely other early necklace units were simply threaded for suspension. Sharks teeth, chevroned pendants, stone discs and other forms which are transversely drilled for suspension, would undoubtedly have been lashed to a main suspension cord or cords, following the Pacific-wide custom. Imitation whale tooth pendants in bone or stone also, although they are drilled parallel to their suspension cord, most likely were strung or lashed beneath the main decorative suspension cord. The widely used pictures of reconstructed 'whale tooth' necklaces simply strung on a twisted line (see for example Duff 1950:Pl.17) may not be correct.

Duff's previously held view that the twin-lobed pendant is an early form was proved right by the finding of the Wairau Bar example (Duff 1950:110). Archaeological confirmation comes with the Manukau South Head find which is associated with other typically archaic material in the most important early assemblage of the Auckland region. Additional internal evidence adds weight to the dating of these artefacts. The notching on the Porirua example is a characteristically early feature. Nelson raw material is itself suggestive of a date when access to, and distribution of, other Nelson stone materials was at its height, that is, in the early period.

The Nelson origin of the twin-lobed pendant is clearly indicated by the distribution of the ten reported finds (see Fig. 1). Three (possibly four) came from the district, with another two from the nearby southern shore of Cook Strait. Three more pendants come from the south-west coast of the North Island, which is highly accessible by sea from Nelson. Manukau South Head and Portland Island are further away. It can be argued that the Manukau location is a northerly extension of the west coast North Island distribution. It is unfortunate, however, that the Portland Island location is open to question. If the location is correct then it is an interesting exception to the Cook Strait and west coast distribution; if, in fact, the item comes from Nelson, as is possible, then it adds to the strong focus of known finds from that region.

Twin-lobed pendants confirm the importance of the Nelson district as a source of stone material early in the occupation of New Zealand by Polynesian people. Metasomatised argillite from the district was the supreme raw material for adzes in

the early period and is found at archaic sites throughout New Zealand. Serpentine occurs in association with metasomatised argillite: exploitation of the latter would have brought skilled stoneworkers into contact with the serpentine. The raw material was also used for the marvellous disc-shaped pendants and what Duff (1956:Pl. 19A) calls "aberrant 'whale-tooth' pendants", again artefacts of the early period. It is also notable that twin-lobed pendants are found only on the coast and usually at sites or localities of strongly archaic affinities. Thus Wairau Bar, Delaware Bay, Whangamoia and Manukau South Head are important early sites, while Pelorus Sound, Porirua and Waverley are all districts rich in early sites or finds.

The location of finds in the Cook Strait area and up the west coast of the North Island may indicate something more general about the distribution route of stone materials from the Nelson region. Metasomatised argillite is now so widely distributed throughout New Zealand in the form of adzes that a very considerable study would be needed before a pattern could be established, and then it is doubtful if it would be as simple as that afforded by the distribution of twin-lobed pendants illustrated here in Fig. 1. There are, in fact, good reasons for arguing that the west coast of the North Island afforded the easiest route north from the Nelson area. It avoided a canoe passage south-east through Cook Strait and north along the stormy Wairarapa coast, and the land route along the coast, to Taranaki at least, was comparatively uninterrupted by peninsulas and rocky coasts characteristic of the east coast. There are, nonetheless, other possible reasons for the distribution. It may be, for example, that there were strong tribal links between people of the south-west coast of the North Island and the northern South Island, and that serpentine pendants were among items exchanged as tangible tokens of these links.

In regard to the age of the twin-lobed pendant it is interesting to consider the history of the Adele Island item. Skinner & Phillipps (1953:177, 191) note and illustrate the incised design over the curved outer surface of the remaining lobe (see Fig. 8). They do not discuss the hole drilled through the broken neck to allow its re-use as a pendant of fundamentally different aspect. It is clear that the hole and the incised design are related. Almost certainly the broken pendant has been re-used; the designs serve the dual purpose of decoration and, more importantly, establishing the new owner's relationship with the pendant and denying or nullifying any potentially dangerous earlier relationship. Such an item, when found, would easily be recognised as being man-made and could not be treated lightly. The new owner must say who he is and give notice of ownership. The suggestion of Skinner & Phillipps (1953:177) that the motifs are unusual in the context of Maori design seems unjustified. The decoration takes the form of characteristic late Maori motifs: single spirals, fishhook shapes, and a concentric design similar to the human mouth of some regional styles of wood carving.

In referring to the twin-lobed pendant as "human testicles" Skinner (1974:58) follows Duff's (1950:110) interpretation of the symbolism of the form. Duff (1950:111) writes: "I would suggest that these hybrid reels represent a local memory of the 'phallic' ornaments of whale ivory which were elaborated in recent times in the Cook Islands, at Atiu, where a single large amulet was worn as a breast pendant, and at Mangaia where smaller ones served as units of composite necklaces." The present writer would

add that the smaller examples are also represented in the collection of Auckland Museum among material from Rurutu in the Austral group. The Austral and Cook group examples date from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century (see Te Rangi Hiroa 1944:108-116).

If the twin-lobed pendant does indeed represent human testicles then this could be argued to indicate descent and status — long important to Polynesians. The suggestion that it may be linked to the Austral and Cook Islands testicular form, however, leaves some important questions unanswered. The most obvious is that of chronology: if there is an historical relationship between the ivory units of the central Pacific and the New Zealand pendant, then it would be interesting to have evidence of ancestral forms. Assuming the twin-lobed pendant to be early in the New Zealand sequence, then similar or ancestral forms might be expected from early levels in eastern Polynesian sites. Exactly what form these might take is open to question. An interpretation which links historically a symbolic and minimal early form from the geographic periphery of east Polynesia to a highly representational form dating from perhaps five or six centuries later and found in the central eastern Polynesian homeland region, clearly implies major gaps in our knowledge.

The relationship of the twin-lobed pendant to other New Zealand forms is also of interest; Duff (1950:106) gave the name “hybrid reel” to the form and states the case for a formal relationship with the well known and widely distributed archaic reel unit made of ivory, bone or stone. The link is through a single example of a cleft reel made of serpentine and held in the National Museum (see Duff 1950:Pl. 14). If we consider the suggested symbolism of the twin-lobed pendant, and regard it merely as a variant of the reel as Duff suggests, then there is a clear implication that the reel form too is a testicular symbol. An argument against this is that reel and twin-lobed units appear together in late central Pacific necklaces; thus they would appear, in these cases at least, to project different messages or ideas, whatever these are. Nonetheless, it is not impossible that in New Zealand the reel has a similar symbolism to the twin-lobed pendant. There is, however, only one cleft reel to link the two forms: nor is interpretation of the twin-lobed form as human testicles itself above argument.

A further consideration concerns the relationship of archaic pendants or necklace units and later Maori forms. Similar notions concerning such matters as descent, mana, role and status are widespread throughout Polynesia and it is unlikely these fundamental social concepts changed much in New Zealand. It is the formal symbolisms or representations of such concepts in art and ornament which tend to change and not the underlying concepts themselves. An argument can be made that pendant forms in New Zealand, both early and late, relate something of importance concerning the wearer. It might be expected therefore that the range of messages would be more or less the same for the early and late ranges of artefacts. There has been little enough study of the meaning and significance of late Maori pendants of jade and other material. Some understanding of the late material might give us clues as to the importance and symbolism of the archaic range, of which the twin-lobed pendant is such a distinctive part.

Acknowledgements. I would like to thank museum people and private individuals who have provided information and illustrations of the various pendants; in particular David Butts (Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum), Brian Henderson (Wanganui Regional Museum), Beverley McCulloch (Canterbury Museum), Maurice Watson (Nelson Provincial Museum), Mavis Brambley, Jim Eyles and Ross Webber. Caroline Phillips drew the map, Alan Leatherby photographed the Auckland Museum pieces and Joan Lawrence drew the Porirua and Portland Island finds.

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